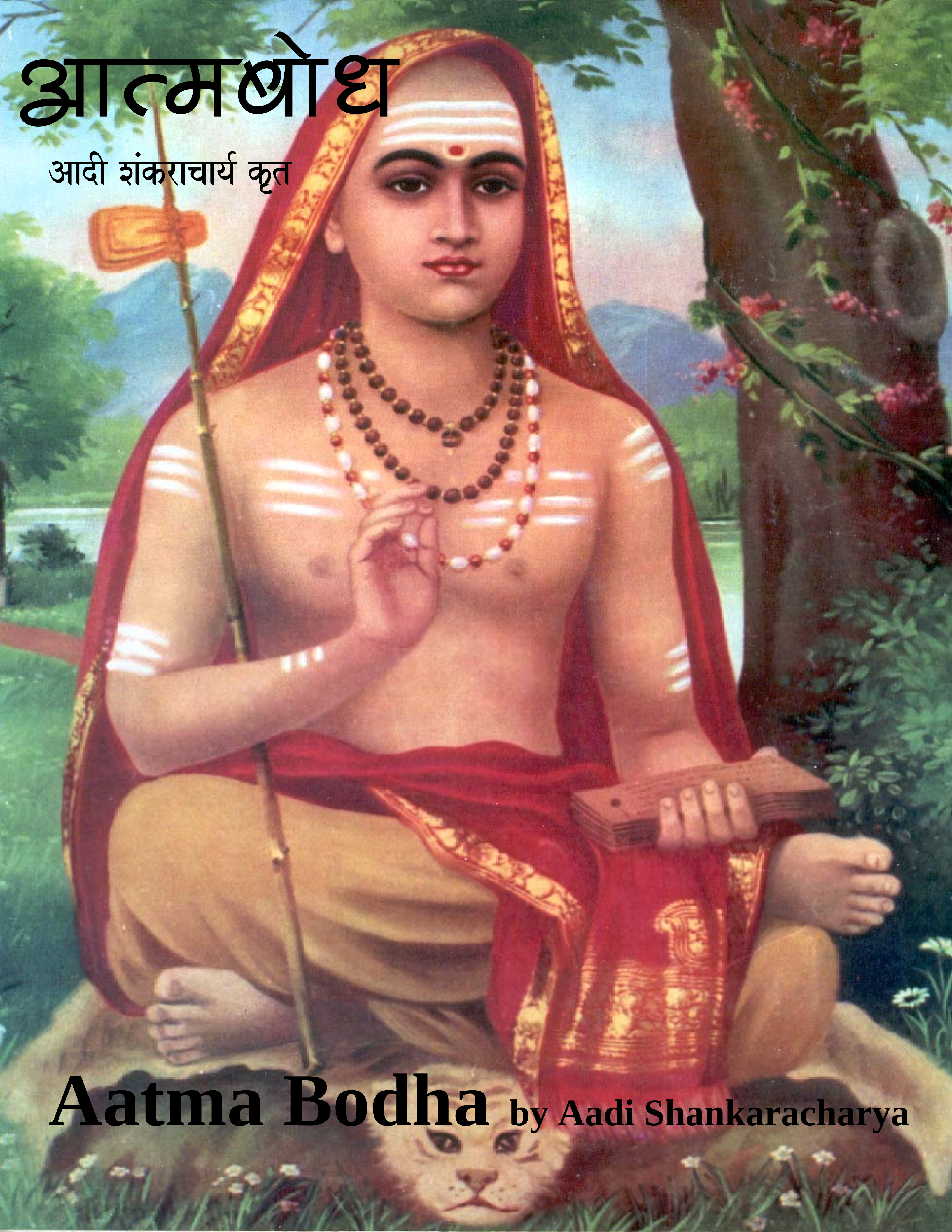


आत्मबोध
आदी शंकराचार्य कृत
Aatma Bodha by Aadi Shankaracharya

.. Atma Bodha ..

॥ आत्म बोध ॥

नमः श्रीशङ्करानन्दगुरुपादाम्बुजन्मने ।
सविलासमहामोहग्राहग्रासैककर्मणे ॥
namaH shrIsha NkarAnandagurupAdAmbujanmane .
savilAsamahAmohagrAhagrAsaikakarmaNe ..
– pa nchadashI

‘I bow at the lotus feet of the Guru, Shankara, whose function is to eliminate the alligator of delusion (moha) with all its branches.’

Atma Bodha, meaning self knowledge, was composed by Adi Shankara sometime in the 8th century.

To quote Sri Radhakrishnan ‘The Advaitism of Shankara is a system of great speculative daring and logical subtlety . Its austere intellectualism, its remorseless logic, which marches on indifferent to the hopes and beliefs of man, its relative freedom from theological obsessions, make it a great example of a purely philosophical scheme . It is impossible to read Shankara’s writings, packed as they are with serious and subtle thinking, without being conscious that one is in contact with a mind of a very fine penetration and profound spirituality . With his acute feeling of the immeasurable world, his stirring gaze into the abysmal mysteries of the spirit, his unswerving resolve to say neither more nor less than what could be proved, Shankara stands out as a heroic figure of the first rank in the somewhat motley crowd of the religious thinkers of medieval India ....

Shankara taught us to love Truth, respect reason and realize the purpose of life . Twelve centuries have passed, and yet his influence is visible.’

His influence on Indian philosophy is so enormous that most of the later philosophies that evolved in India had either to agree with him or disagree with him, quoting him nevertheless.

Shankara, in his indisputable style, allows a place for Karma and Bhakti while emphasising the prime necessity of j nAna for the realization of the Self . For example, while commenting on Bhagvadgita 18.45, he takes Bhakti to be identical to j nAna by quoting 7.16-18 of the gItA where Krishna says that a j nAni is one of His Bhaktas.

In Vivekachudamani, he goes on to say that Bhakti is one of the most conducive causes for liberation . Similarly, in the third verse of

atma bodha, he says that karma is not opposed to ignorance, though it can not destroy ignorance . Undoubtedly a great religious reformer and philosopher, Shankara embraces within his fold all pantheism while maintaining the principle of non-duality.

Though Shankara is famous for his commentaries (bhAShya-s) on the three major texts considered as 'launching pad' for liberation (prasthAnatrayI, the triple cannon),
namely bhagvad gItA, brahmasUtra-s, and upaniShad-s, he has composed a large number of stotra-s (hymns in praise of various gods) and also brief expositions in prose and verse (prakaraNa-s). Atma Bodha falls into the last category . A rare but an excellent commentary of this work in Sanskrit has been provided by Swami kRiShNAnandAshramI and has been translated in to english by Vidyaratna Menon . Other noteworthy translations of the text are by Swami Chinmayananda, Swami Nikhilananda, TMP Mahadevan, and Parthasarathy, to name a few.

The text of Atmabodha avoids the technicalities found in the vedas, but conveys the message of jnana yoga (the path of knowledge) to the layman . In a short compendium of sixty eight stanzas, the knowledge of the Self is described in an unique and simple style . Shankara starts with the requirements of the aspirant, and goes on to explain the nature of world -Samsara, the embodiments of the soul, the influence of mAyA and the superimposition of Atman . He describes the meditation technique based on aphorism 'I am Brahman,' the supreme being,
'Aham Brahmasmi', and elucidates the fruits of Self-realization and the state of the jivanmukta (liberated soul).

Since the realization of the Self can not be had from books or scriptures, Shankara insists on the necessity of instruction by a Self-realized Guru (teacher). The intense desire to liberate and the effort required by the sAdhaka (aspirant) is emphasized . If there is no effort, there can not be a result . As Sri Radhakrishnan says 'People in our society have resolved to renounce nothing, but wish to enjoy the fruit of renunciation.' The vedanta kesari puts it 'The goal we desire (should be) to reach the ideal society of the prophets, a society of just, peaceful, morally and intellectuially progressive community of non attached and responsible individuals, the means we adopt therefore must be worthy of the ends . Then only the real age of millennium will dawn wherein one feels that the whole world is one's family of kith and kin, a place for nothing but love and fellow feeling, in short a vasudhaivakuTumbakam.h (universe as a family).'

Commenting on the first verse of Atma Bodha, the sanskrit commentator, Swami kRiShNAnandAshramI, remarks that Sri Shankaracharya composed the three great bhashyas (of the upaniShads, gItA, and brahma sUtra) for the guidance of people qualified by birth, environment, circumstances, and mental, moral and spiritual development . Out of great

compassion for the rest of the masses, Shankara composed Atmabodha for explaining the knowledge of the Self.

The treatise of the knowledge of self, Atmabodha, is meant for those whose sins have been destroyed by religious austerities, who are calm, devoid of attachment and are persons desirous of liberation (i.e . mumukShu-s desirous of mokSha).
The qualified are those who have the four fold requisities, 1. discrimination between real and unreal (viveka) 2. non-attachment (i.e indifferent to the results of one's action) 3. desire for emancipation (mumukShu-s) and 4. the six fold qualities,

a . sAma (restraint of internal senses)

b . dAma (restraint of external senses)

c . uparati (control of senses, without jumping from one object to another)

d . samAdhAna (mind constantly on the Self)

e . titIkShA (indifferent endurance)

f . shraddhA (faith).

The rest of the sixty seven verses may be roughly classified in to the following subjects, means for emancipation (2-5), sa.nsAra (6-12), various sharIra-s (embodiments) (13-19), adhyAsa (15-19), aha.nkAra (26-30), doctrine of neti-neti (31-36), sAdhanA (37-39), self-realization (40-46), vision of a j nAnI and characteristics of a jivanmukta (47-53), and finally the nature of Brahman (54-68).

May the great AchArya, one of the greatest persons to grace this planet, Shankara, make us aware of His grace.

॥ आत्मबोधः ॥

.. AtmabodhaH ..

तपोभिः क्षीणपापानां शान्तानां वीतरागिणाम् ।
मुमुक्षूणामपेक्ष्योऽयमात्मबोधो विधीयते ॥ १॥
बोधोऽन्यसाधनेभ्यो हि साक्षान्मोक्षैकसाधनम् ।
पाकस्य वह्निवज्ज्ञानं विना मोक्षो न सिध्यति ॥ २॥
अविरोधितया कर्म नाविद्यां विनिवर्तयेत् ।
विद्याविद्यां निहन्त्येव तेजस्तिमिरसङ्घवत् ॥ ३॥
परिच्छन्न इवाज्ञानात्तन्नाशे सति केवलः । var अवच्छिन्न
स्वयं प्रकाशते ह्यात्मा मेघापायेंऽशुमानिव ॥ ४॥
अज्ञानकलुषं जीवं ज्ञानाभ्यासाद्विनिर्मलम् ।

कृत्वा ज्ञानं स्वयं नश्येज्जलं कतकरेणुवत् ॥ ५॥
संसारः स्वप्नतुल्यो हि रागद्वेषादिसङ्कुलः ।
स्वकाले सत्यवद्भाति प्रबोधे सत्यसद्भवेत् ॥ ६॥
तावत्सत्यं जगद्भाति शुक्तिकारजतं यथा ।
यावन्न ज्ञायते ब्रह्म सर्वाधिष्ठानमद्वयम् ॥ ७॥
उपादानेऽखिलाधारे जगन्ति परमेश्वरे ।
सर्गस्थितिलयान् यान्ति बुद्बुदानीव वारिणि ॥ ८॥
सच्चिदात्मन्यनुस्यूते नित्ये विष्णौ प्रकल्पिताः ।
व्यक्तयो विविधाः सर्वा हाटके कटकादिवत् ॥ ९॥
यथाकाशो हृषीकेशो नानोपाधिगतो विभुः ।
तद्भेदाद्भिन्नवद्भाति तन्नाशे केवलो भवेत् ॥ १०॥
नानोपाधिवशादेव जातिवर्णाश्रमादयः । var जातिनामाश्रमादयः
आत्मन्यारोपितास्तोये रसवर्णादि भेदवत् ॥ ११।
पंचीकृतमहाभूतसंभवं कर्मसंचितम् ।
शरीरं सुखदुःखानां भोगायतनमुच्यते ॥ १२॥
पंचप्राणमनोबुद्धिदशेन्द्रियसमन्वितम् ।
अपंचीकृतभूतोत्थं सूक्ष्माङ्गं भोगसाधनम् ॥ १३॥
अनाद्यविद्यानिर्वाच्या कारणोपाधिरुच्यते ।
उपाधित्रितयादन्यमात्मानमवधारयेत् ॥ १४॥
पंचकोशादियोगेन तत्तन्मय इव स्थितः ।
शुद्धात्मा नीलवस्त्रादियोगेन स्फटिको यथा ॥ १५॥
वपुस्तुषादिभिः कोशैर्युक्तं युक्त्यवघाततः ।
आत्मानमन्तरं शुद्धं विविञ्च्यात्तण्डुलं यथा ॥ १६॥
var विद्यर्थ विविञ्च्यात्, आशीर्लिङ्ग benedictive विविच्यात्
सदा सर्वगतोऽप्यात्मा न सर्वत्रावभासते ।
बुद्धावेवावभासेत स्वच्छेषु प्रतिबिम्बवत् ॥ १७॥
देहेन्द्रियमनोबुद्धिप्रकृतिभ्यो विलक्षणम् ।
तद्वृत्तिसाक्षिणं विद्यादात्मानं राजवत्सदा ॥ १८॥
व्यापृतेष्विन्द्रियेष्वात्मा व्यापारीवाविवेकिनाम् ।
दृश्यतेऽभ्रेषु धावत्सु धावन्निव यथा शशी ॥ १९॥
आत्मचैतन्यमाश्रित्य देहेन्द्रियमनोधियः ।
स्वक्रियार्थेषु वर्तन्ते सूर्यालोकं यथा जनाः । २०॥
देहेन्द्रियगुणान्कर्माण्यमले सच्चिदात्मनि ।
अध्यस्यन्त्यविवेकेन गगने नीलतादिवत् ॥ २१॥
अज्ञानान्मानसोपाधेः कर्तृत्वादीनि चात्मनि ।
कल्प्यन्तेऽम्बुगते चन्द्रे चलनादि यथाम्भसः । २२॥

रागेच्छासुखदुःखादि बुद्धौ सत्यां प्रवर्तते ।
सुषुप्तौ नास्ति तन्नाशे तस्माद्बुद्धेस्तु नात्मनः ॥ २३॥
प्रकाशोऽर्कस्य तोयस्य शैत्यमग्नेर्यथोष्णता ।
स्वभावः सच्चिदानन्दनित्यनिर्मलतात्मनः ॥ २४॥
आत्मनः सच्चिदंशश्च बुद्धेर्वृत्तिरिति द्वयम् ।
संयोज्य चाविवेकेन जानामीति प्रवर्तते ॥ २५॥
आत्मनो विक्रिया नास्ति बुद्धेर्बोधो न जात्विति ।
जीवः सर्वमलं ज्ञात्वा ज्ञाता द्रष्टेति मुह्यति ॥ २६॥
रज्जुसर्पवदात्मानं जीवं ज्ञात्वा भयं वहेत् ।
नाहं जीवः परात्मेति ज्ञातं चेन्निर्भयो भवेत् ॥ २७॥
आत्मावभासयत्येको बुद्ध्यादीनीन्द्रियाण्यपि ।
दीपो घटादिवत्स्वात्मा जडैस्तैर्नावभास्यते ॥ २८॥
स्वबोधे नान्यबोधेच्छा बोधरूपतयात्मनः ।
न दीपस्यान्यदीपेच्छा यथा स्वात्मप्रकाशने ॥ २९॥
निषिध्य निखिलोपाधीन्नेति नेतीति वाक्यतः ।
विद्यादैक्यं महावाक्यैर्जीवात्मपरमात्मनोः ॥ ३०॥
आविद्यकं शरीरादि दृश्यं बुद्बुदवत्क्षरम् ।
एतद्विलक्षणं विद्यादहं ब्रह्मेति निर्मलम् ॥ ३१॥
देहान्यत्वान्न मे जन्मजराकार्श्यलयादयः ।
शब्दादिविषयैः सङ्गो निरिन्द्रियतया न च ॥ ३२॥
अमनस्त्वान्न मे दुःखरागद्वेषभयादयः ।
अप्राणो ह्यमनाः शुभ्र इत्यादि श्रुतिशासनात् ॥ ३३॥
(एतस्माज्जायते प्राणो मनः सर्वेन्द्रियाणि च ।
खं वायुर्ज्योतिरापः पृथिवी विश्वस्य धारिणी ॥) doubtful addition
निर्गुणो निष्क्रियो नित्यो निर्विकल्पो निरंजनः ।
निर्विकारो निराकारो नित्यमुक्तोऽस्मि निर्मलः ॥ ३४॥
अहमाकाशवत्सर्वं बहिरन्तर्गतोऽच्युतः ।
सदा सर्वसमः सिद्धो निःसङ्गो निर्मलोऽचलः ॥ ३५॥
नित्यशुद्धविमुक्तैकमखण्डानन्दमद्वयम् ।
सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं यत्परं ब्रह्माहमेव तत् ॥ ३६॥
एवं निरन्तराभ्यस्ता ब्रह्मैवास्मीति वासना ।
हरत्यविद्याविक्षेपान् रोगानिव रसायनम् ॥ ३७॥
विविक्तदेश आसीनो विरागो विजितेन्द्रियः ।
भावयेदेकमात्मानं तमनन्तमनन्यधीः ॥ ३८॥
आत्मन्येवाखिलं दृश्यं प्रविलाप्य धिया सुधीः ।
भावयेदेकमात्मानं निर्मलाकाशवत्सदा ॥ ३९॥

रूपवर्णादिकं सर्वं विहाय परमार्थवित् ।
परिपुर्णंचिदानन्दस्वरूपेणावतिष्ठते ॥ ४०॥
ज्ञातृज्ञानज्ञेयभेदः परे नात्मनि विद्यते ।
चिदानन्दैकरूपत्वाद्दीप्यते स्वयमेव तत् ॥ ४१॥ var हि ॥
एवमात्मारणौ ध्यानमथने सततं कृते ।
उदितावगतिर्ज्वाला सर्वाज्ञानेन्धनं दहेत् ॥ ४२॥
अरुणेनेव बोधेन पूर्वं सन्तमसे हृते ।
तत आविर्भवेदात्मा स्वयमेवांशुमानिव ॥ ४३॥
आत्मा तु सततं प्राप्तोऽप्यप्राप्तवदविद्यया ।
तन्नाशे प्राप्तवद्भाति स्वकण्ठाभरणं यथा ॥ ४४॥
स्थाणौ पुरुषवद्भ्रान्त्या कृता ब्रह्मणि जीवता ।
जीवस्य तात्त्विके रूपे तस्मिन्दृष्टे निवर्तते ॥ ४५॥
तत्वस्वरूपानुभवादुत्पन्नं ज्ञानमंजसा ।
अहं ममेति चाज्ञानं बाधते दिग्भ्रमादिवत् ॥ ४६॥
सम्यग्विज्ञानवान् योगी स्वात्मन्येवाखिलं जगत् ।
एकं च सर्वमात्मानमीक्षते ज्ञानचक्षुषा ॥ ४७॥
आत्मैवेदं जगत्सर्वमात्मनोऽन्यन्न विद्यते ।
मृदो यद्वद्घटादीनि स्वात्मानं सर्वमीक्षते ॥ ४८॥
जीवन्मुक्तस्तु तद्विद्वान्पूर्वोपाधिगुणान्स्त्यजेत् ।
सच्चिदानन्दरूपत्वात् भवेद्भ्रमरकीटवत् ॥ ४९॥
तीर्त्वा मोहार्णवं हत्वा रागद्वेषादिराक्षसान् ।
योगी शान्तिसमायुक्त आत्मारामो विराजते ॥ ५०॥
बाह्यानित्यसुखासक्तिं हित्वात्मसुखनिर्वृतः ।
घटस्थदीपवत्स्वस्थं स्वान्तरेव प्रकाशते ॥ ५१॥
var दीपवच्छश्वदन्तरेव
उपाधिस्थोऽपि तद्धर्मैरलिप्तो व्योमवन्मुनिः ।
सर्वविन्मूढवत्तिष्ठेदसक्तो वायुवच्चरेत् ॥ ५२॥
उपाधिविलयाद्विष्णौ निर्विशेषं विशेन्मुनिः ।
जले जलं वियद्व्योम्नि तेजस्तेजसि वा यथा ॥ ५३॥
यल्लाभान्नापरो लाभो यत्सुखान्नापरं सुखम् ।
यज्ज्ञानान्नापरं ज्ञानं तद्ब्रह्मेत्यवधारयेत् ॥ ५४॥
यद्दृष्ट्वा नापरं दृश्यं यद्भूत्वा न पुनर्भवः ।
यज्ज्ञात्वा नापरं ज्ञेयं तद्ब्रह्मेत्यवधारयेत् ॥ ५५॥
तिर्यगूर्ध्वमधः पूर्णं सच्चिदानन्दमद्वयम् ।
अनन्तं नित्यमेकं यत्तद्ब्रह्मेत्यवधारयेत् ॥ ५६॥
अतद्व्यावृत्तिरूपेण वेदान्तैर्लक्ष्यतेऽद्वयम् । var ऽव्ययम्

अखण्डानन्दमेकं यत्तद्ब्रह्मेत्यवधारयेत् ॥ ५७॥
अखण्डानन्दरूपस्य तस्यानन्दलवाश्रिताः ।
ब्रह्माद्यास्तारतम्येन भवन्त्यानन्दिनोऽखिलाः ॥ ५८॥
तद्युक्तमखिलं वस्तु व्यवहारस्तदन्वितः । var व्यवहारश्चिदन्वितः
तस्मात्सर्वगतं ब्रह्म क्षीरे सर्पिरिवाखिले ॥ ५९॥
अनण्वस्थूलमह्रस्वमदीर्घमजमव्ययम् ।
अरूपगुणवर्णाख्यं तद्ब्रह्मेत्यवधारयेत् ॥ ६०॥
यद्भासा भास्यतेऽर्कादि भास्यैर्यत्तु न भास्यते ।
येन सर्वमिदं भाति तद्ब्रह्मेत्यवधारयेत् ॥ ६१॥
स्वयमन्तर्बहिर्व्याप्य भासयन्नखिलं जगत् ।
ब्रह्म प्रकाशते वह्निप्रतप्तायसपिण्डवत् ॥ ६२॥
जगद्विलक्षणं ब्रह्म ब्रह्मणोऽन्यन्न किंचन ।
ब्रह्मान्यद्भाति चेन्मिथ्या यथा मरुमरीचिका ॥ ६३॥
दृश्यते श्रूयते यद्यद्ब्रह्मणोऽन्यन्न तद्भवेत् ।
तत्त्वज्ञानाच्च तद्ब्रह्म सच्चिदानन्दमद्वयम् ॥ ६४॥
सर्वगं सच्चिदात्मानं ज्ञानचक्षुर्निरीक्षते ।
अज्ञानचक्षुर्नेक्षेत भास्वन्तं भानुमन्धवत् ॥ ६५॥
श्रवणादिभिरुद्दीप्तज्ञानाग्निपरितापितः ।
जीवः सर्वमलान्मुक्तः स्वर्णवद्द्योतते स्वयम् ॥ ६६॥
हृदाकाशोदितो ह्यात्मा बोधभानुस्तमोऽपहृत् ।
सर्वव्यापी सर्वधारी भाति भासयतेऽखिलम् ॥ ६७॥
दिग्देशकालाद्यनपेक्ष्य सर्वगं
शीतादिहृन्नित्यसुखं निरंजनम् ।
यः स्वात्मतीर्थं भजते विनिष्क्रियः
स सर्ववित्सर्वगतोऽमृतो भवेत् ॥ ६८॥
॥ इति शंकराचार्यविरचित आत्मबोधः समाप्तः ॥

References in introduction include notes from the translations
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Atma Bodha

by Adi Sankaracharya's

Translated by Swami Chinmayananda

Published by Chinmaya Mission, Mumbai

1. I am composing the Atma-Bodha, this treatise of the Knowledge of the Self, for those who have purified themselves by austerities and are peaceful in heart and calm, who are free from cravings and are desirous of liberation.

2. Just as the fire is the direct cause for cooking, so without Knowledge no emancipation can be had. Compared with all other forms of discipline Knowledge of the Self is the one direct means for liberation.

3. Action cannot destroy ignorance, for it is not in conflict with or opposed to ignorance. Knowledge does verily destroy ignorance as light destroys deep darkness.

4. The Soul appears to be finite because of ignorance. When ignorance is destroyed the Self which does not admit of any multiplicity truly reveals itself by itself: like the Sun when the clouds pass away.

5. Constant practice of knowledge purifies the Self ('Jivatman'), stained by ignorance and then disappears itself – as the powder of the 'Kataka-nut' settles down after it has cleansed the muddy water.

6. The world, which is full of attachments, aversions, etc., is like a dream. It appears to be real, as long as it continues but appears to be unreal when one is awake (i.e., when true wisdom dawns).

7. The Jagat appears to be true (Satyam) so long as Brahman, the substratum, the basis of all this creation, is not realized. It is like the illusion of silver in the mother-of pearl.

8. Like bubbles in the water, the worlds rise, exist and dissolve in the Supreme Self, which is the material cause and the prop of everything.

9. All the manifested world of things and beings are projected by imagination upon the substratum which is the Eternal All-pervading Vishnu, whose nature is Existence-Intelligence; just as the different ornaments are all made out of the same gold.

10. The All-pervading Akasa appears to be diverse on account of its association with various conditionings (Upadhis) which are different from each other. Space becomes one on the destruction of these limiting adjuncts: So also the Omnipresent Truth appears to be diverse on account of Its association with the various Upadhis and becomes one on the destruction of these Upadhis.

11. Because of Its association with different conditionings (Upadhis) such ideas as caste, colour and position are super-imposed upon the Atman, as flavour, colour, etc., are super-imposed on water.

12. Determined for each individual by his own past actions and made up of the Five elements – that have gone through the process of "five-fold self-division and mutual combination" (Pancheekarana) – are born the gross-body, the medium through which pleasure and pain are experienced, the tent-of-experiences.

13. The five Pranas, the ten organs and the Manas and the Buddhi, formed from the rudimentary elements (Tanmatras) before their "five-fold division and mutual combination with one another" (Pancheekarana) and this is the subtle body, the instruments-of-experience (of the individual).

14. Avidya, which is indescribable and beginningless is the Causal Body. Know for certain that the Atman is other than these three conditioning bodies (Upadhis).

15. In its identification with the five-sheaths the Immaculate Atman appears to have borrowed their qualities upon itself; as in the case of a crystal which appears to gather unto itself colour of its vicinity (blue cloth, etc.,)

. 16. Through discriminative self-analysis and logical thinking one should separate the Pure self within from the sheaths as one separates the rice from the husk, bran, etc., that are covering it.

17. The Atman does not shine in everything although He is All-pervading. He is manifest only in the inner equipment, the intellect (Buddhi): just as the reflection in a clean mirror.

18. One should understand that the Atman is always like the King, distinct from the body, senses, mind and intellect, all of which constitute the matter (Prakriti); and is the witness of their functions.

19. The moon appears to be running when the clouds move in the sky. Likewise to the non-discriminating person the Atman appears to be active when It is observed through the functions of the sense-organs.

20. Depending upon the energy of vitality of Consciousness (Atma Chaitanya) the body, senses, mind and intellect engage themselves in their respective activities, just as men work depending upon the light of the Sun.

21. Fools, because they lack in their powers of discrimination superimpose on the Atman, the Absolute-Existence-Knowledge (Sat-Chit), all the varied functions of the body and the senses, just as they attribute blue colour and the like to the sky.

22. The tremblings that belong to the waters are attributed through ignorance to the reflected moon dancing on it: likewise agency of action, of enjoyment and of other limitations (which really belong to the mind) are delusively understood as the nature of the Self (Atman).

23. Attachment, desire, pleasure, pain, etc., are perceived to exist so long as Buddhi or mind functions. They are not perceived in deep sleep when the mind ceases to exist. Therefore they belong to the mind alone and not to the Atman.

24. Just as luminosity is the nature of the Sun, coolness of water and heat of fire, so too the nature of the Atman is Eternity, Purity, Reality, Consciousness and Bliss.

25. By the indiscriminate blending of the two – the Existence-Knowledge-aspect of the Self and the thought-wave of the intellect – there arises the notion of "I know".

26. Atman never does anything and the intellect of its own accord has no capacity to experience 'I know'. But the individuality in us delusorily thinks he is himself the seer and the knower.

27. Just as the person who regards a rope as a snake is overcome by fear, so also one considering oneself as the ego (Jiva) is overcome by fear. The ego-centric individuality in us regains fearlessness by realising that It is not a Jiva but is Itself the Supreme Soul.

28. Just as a lamp illumines a jar or a pot, so also the Atman illumines the mind and the sense organs, etc. These material-objects by themselves cannot illumine themselves because they are inert.

29. A lighted-lamp does not need another lamp to illumine its light. So too, Atman which is Knowledge itself needs no other knowledge to know it.

30. By a process of negation of the conditionings (Upadhis) through the help of the scriptural statement 'It is not this, It is not this', the oneness of the individual soul and the Supreme Soul, as indicated by the great Mahavakyas, has to be realised.

31. The body, etc., up to the "Causal Body" – Ignorance – which are objects perceived, are as perishable as bubbles. Realize through discrimination that I am the 'Pure Brahman' ever completely separate from all these.

32. I am other than the body and so I am free from changes such as birth, wrinkling, senility, death, etc. I have nothing to do with the sense objects such as sound and taste, for I am without the sense-organs.

33. I am other than the mind and hence, I am free from sorrow, attachment, malice and fear, for "HE is without breath and without mind, Pure, etc.", is the Commandment of the great scripture, the Upanishads.

34. I am without attributes and actions; Eternal (Nitya) without any desire and thought (Nirvikalpa), without any dirt (Niranjana), without any change (Nirvikara), without form (Nirakara), ever-liberated (Nitya Mukta) ever-pure (Nirmala).

35. Like the space I fill all things within and without. Changeless and the same in all, at all times I am pure, unattached, stainless and motionless.

36. I am verily that Supreme Brahman alone which is Eternal, Pure and Free, One, indivisible and non-dual and of the nature of Changeless-Knowledge-Infinite.

37. The impression "I am Brahman" thus created by constant practice destroys ignorance and the agitation caused by it, just as medicine or Rasayana destroys disease.

38. Sitting in a solitary place, freeing the mind from desires and controlling the senses, meditate with unswerving attention on the Atman which is One without-a-second.

39. The wise one should intelligently merge the entire world-of-objects in the Atman alone and constantly think of the Self ever as contaminated by anything as the sky.

40. He who has realised the Supreme, discards all his identification with the objects of names and forms. (Thereafter) he dwells as an embodiment of the Infinite Consciousness and Bliss. He becomes the Self.

41. There are no distinctions such as “Knower”, the “Knowledge” and the “Object of Knowledge” in the Supreme Self. On account of Its being of the nature of endless Bliss, It does not admit of such distinctions within Itself. It alone shines by Itself.

42. When this, the lower and the higher aspects of the Self are well churned together, the fire of knowledge is born from it, which in its mighty conflagration shall burn down all the fuel of ignorance in us.

43. The Lord of the early dawn (Aruna) himself has already looted away the thick darkness, when soon the sun rises. The Divine Consciousness of the Self rises when the right knowledge has already killed the darkness in the bosom.

44. Atman is an ever-present Reality. Yet, because of ignorance it is not realised. On the destruction of ignorance Atman is realised. It is like the missing ornament of one’s neck.

45. Brahman appears to be a ‘Jiva’ because of ignorance, just as a post appears to be a ghost. The ego-centric-individuality is destroyed when the real nature of the ‘Jiva’ is realised as the Self.

46. The ignorance characterised by the notions ‘I’ and ‘Mine’ is destroyed by the knowledge produced by the realisation of the true nature of the Self, just as right information removes the wrong notion about the directions.

47. The Yogi of perfect realisation and enlightenment sees through his “eye of wisdom” (Gyana Chakshush) the entire universe in his own Self and regards everything else as his own Self and nothing else.

48. Nothing whatever exists other than the Atman: the tangible universe is verily Atman. As pots and jars are verily made of clay and cannot be said to be anything but clay, so too, to the enlightened soul and that is perceived is the Self.

49. A liberated one, endowed with Self-knowledge, gives up the traits of his previously explained equipments (Upadhis) and because of his nature of Sat-chit-ananda, he verily becomes Brahman like (the worm that grows to be) a wasp.

50. After crossing the ocean of delusion and killing the monsters of likes and dislikes, the Yogi who is united with peace dwells in the glory of his own realised Self – as an Atmaram.

51. The self-abiding Jivan Mukta, relinquishing all his attachments to the illusory external happiness and satisfied with the bliss derived from the Atman, shines inwardly like a lamp placed inside a jar.

52. Though he lives in the conditionings (Upadhis), he, the contemplative one, remains ever unconcerned with anything or he may move about like the wind, perfectly unattached.

53. On the destruction of the Upadhis, the contemplative one is totally absorbed in ‘Vishnu’, the All-pervading Spirit, like water into water, space into space and light into light.

54. Realise That to be Brahman, the attainment of which leaves nothing more to be attained, the blessedness of which leaves no other blessing to be desired and the knowledge of which leaves nothing more to be known.

55. Realise that to be Brahman which, when seen, leaves nothing more to be seen, which having become one is not born again in this world and which, when knowing leaves nothing else to be known.

56. Realise that to be Brahman, which is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss-Absolute, which is Non-dual, Infinite, Eternal and One and which fills all the quarters – above and below and all that exists between.

57. Realise that to be Brahman which is Non-dual, Indivisible, One and Blissful and which is indicated in Vedanta as the Immutable Substratum, realised after the negation of all tangible objects.

58. Deities like Brahma and others taste only a particle, of the unlimited Bliss of Brahman and enjoy in proportion their share of that particle.

59. All objects are pervaded by Brahman. All actions are possible because of Brahman: therefore Brahman permeates everything as butter permeates milk.

60. Realise that to be Brahman which is neither subtle nor gross: neither short nor long: without birth or change: without form, qualities, colour and name.

61. That by the light of which the luminous, orbs like the Sun and the Moon are illuminated, but which is not illumined by their light, realise that to be Brahman.

62. Pervading the entire universe outwardly and inwardly the Supreme Brahman shines of Itself like the fire that permeates a red-hot iron-ball and glows by itself.

63. Brahman is other than this, the universe. There exists nothing that is not Brahman. If any object other than Brahman appears to exist, it is unreal like the mirage.

64. All that is perceived, or heard, is Brahman and nothing else. Attaining the knowledge of the Reality, one sees the Universe as the non-dual Brahman, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss-Absolute.

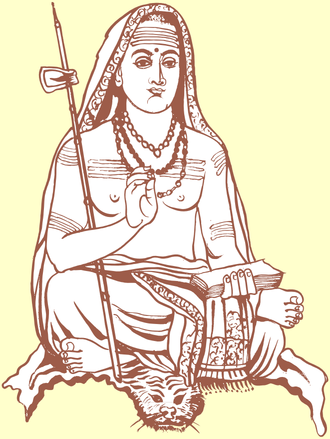
65. Though Atman is Pure Consciousness and ever present everywhere, yet It is perceived by the eye-of-wisdom alone: but one whose vision is obscured by ignorance he does not see It; as the blind do not see the resplendent Sun.

66. The ‘Jiva’ free from impurities, being heated in the fire of knowledge kindled by hearing and so on, shines of itself like gold.

67. The Atman, the Sun of Knowledge that rises in the sky of the heart, destroys the darkness of the ignorance, pervades and sustains all and shines and makes everything to shine.

68. He who renouncing all activities, who is free of all the limitations of time, space and direction, worships his own Atman which is present everywhere, which is the destroyer of heat and cold, which is Bliss-Eternal and stainless, becomes All-knowing and All-pervading and attains thereafter Immortality.

Thus concludes Atma-Bodha.



ATMA BODHA

(A Treatise on the knowledge of Atma)

by

SRI ADI SANKARACHARYA

Text in Roman Script with English translation and Commentary

by

A.S.DEEKSHITULU

&

CH. SUNDARA RAMIAH

FOREWORD

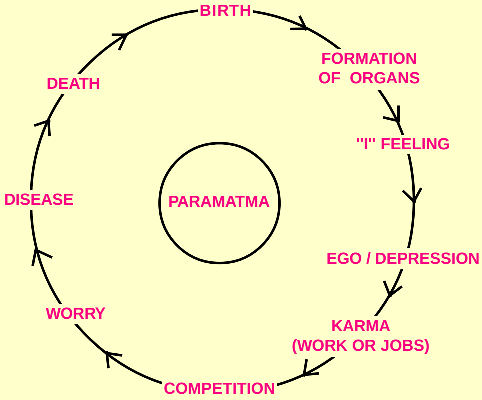
Sruti Smruti Puraanaanaam

Aalayam Karunaalayam

Namaami Bhagavatpaadam

Sankaram Loka Sankaram.

This book Atma Bodha or knowledge of Self (Atma) is an outcome of deep thinking about why we are born and living, influencing or getting influenced by every one around us, developing relations with them both physically and mentally, worrying for them and either losing them or leaving them temporarily due to life cycle and permanently by death. According to Bhagavatgeeta and Upanishads it is due to this Birth - Death Cycle.



For everyone this Birth Cycle is continuing. This is what worried the thinkers and philosophers. "How long should we dwell in these cycles? Is there no end.

Birth is the result of formation of organs of the Body and Mind. This is followed by the "I" feeling i.e., I am doing, I am successfull, I am suffering etc., This "I" feeling results in either ego and depression. This ego results in Karma which results in competition which results in worry. The worry results in disease. Disease results in Death which is followed by another birth. The cycle continues thus.

The great Jnanis worked hard to find out how to put an end to these cycles of birth and death though the ignorant kept on asking why should we bother when no one guarantees a rebirth or a birth known to us or a birth in which we do not remember any thing about this birth. Such ignorant lived for physical pleasures, suffered or enjoyed as a result of their works and died. This Atma Bodha is not for them. This is for thinkers who are really interested to acquire wisdom and attain liberation for the soul (Atma) from the birth cycle.

Atma Bodha (Knowledge of Self) is one of the works of Adi Sankaracharya. In this work he expounds clearly with the help of homely analogies the nature of the consciousness (Self) and the means of self realisation. The speciality of this Atma Bodha is that though each Sloka has one direct meaning the concept and inner meaning of each Sloka is really more thoughtful and enlightens the reader. An attempt made to explain the inner meaning also.

Is the following books on Atma Bodha were consulted in the preparation of this translation.

1. Self knowledge of Sri Sankaracharya by Swami Nikilananda of Sri Ramakrishna Mission.
2. Atma Bodha by Swami Chinmayananda.

ATMA BODHA

(Treatise of the knowledge of Atma)

1. Tapobhih Ksheenapaapaanaam

Santanaam Veetaraginaam

Mumukshoonaam Apekshyoyam

Atmabodho Vidheeyate

This Atma Bodha is designed for the benefit of those who got rid of sins by doing penance, those who have a peaceful mind, those who could overcome their cravings, and those who are desirous of moksha or liberation.

2. Bodho anya-Sadhanebhyo Hi

Sakshan-Moksha Eka Sadhanam

Pakasya Vahnivat Jnanam

Vina Moksho Na Sidhyati

Though other articles such as rice, vegetables, water and pots are necessary, to cook a meal at is fire that actually cooks the meal. As fire is thus the direct cause of cooking, Knowledge of the Atma and not any other form of discipline i.e., practice of austerities and rituals, is the sole direct means to attain moksha or liberation. The purpose of austerities is purification of heart and creation of a mental condition to aid one's spiritual growth and render it fit for pursuing the path of knowledge (jnana marga)

3. Avirodhitayaa Karma

Navidyaam Vinivartayet

Vidya-Avidyaam Nihantyeva

Tejashtimira-sanghavat.

Karma or Action cannot destroy ignorance as it is not opposed to it. Knowledge or Jnana alone destroys ignorance as dense darkness is destroyed by light. By means of action one fulfill his desires. Therefore action is in harmony with ignorance and cannot therefore directly destroy it.

Here ignorance does not mean illiteracy or absence of book knowledge. According to Vedanta the knowledge of the nonduality of Brahma and Atma is the only true knowledge; all else is ignorance (Ajnana or Avidya). Such jnana alone removes the ignorance as dense darkness is destroyed by light.

4. Paricchinna iva ajnanat

Tannase Sati Kevalah

Swayam Prakasate hi Aatma

Meghapaaye Amsumaaniva

Due to Ajnana or ignorance, one imposes limits to Atma. When this Ajnana is destroyed, Atma can be visualised just as sun appears emerging when dark clouds are dispersed.

As the true nature of sun is hidden by a cloud, so the true nature of the eternal and self-luminous Atma is hidden by ignorance. On account of this ignorance the all pervading Atma seems to be a physical a finite being. Such ignorance is destroyed by means of contemplation and realisation of the truth contained in the vedic mahavakyas like Aham Brahmasmi (I am Brahma) and Prajnanam Brahma (Brahma is pure consciousness).

5. Ajnana Kalusham Jeevam

Jnanaabhyasat Vinirmalam

Krutwa Jnanam Swayam Nasyet

Jalam Katakarenuvat.

The embodied soul. Jivatma, rendered dirty by ignorance is purified by knowledge through long and uninterrupted meditation on Brahma, and then itself disappears as the powder of Kataka nut (cleaning nut) precipitates itself after precipitating impurities suspended in muddy water.

The jivatma is rendered dirty by illusory ideas of birth and death, happiness and unhappiness which are superimposed upon the self due to ignorance. Long and uninterrupted meditation on Brahma firmly stamps a man's consciousness with the knowledge of his true divine nature and such self knowledge makes a man realise that he is not the doer or an experiencer but the all

pervading Brahma, Existance, Knowledge and Bliss Absolute (Satchit Anand). After having thus sublimated the mind, knowledge itself disappears like the powder of kataka nut which disappears after cleansing muddy water.

6. Samsarah Swapnatulyo hi
Ragadweshadi Samkulah
Swakaale Satyavatbhati
Prabodhe sati Asadbhavet.

The world, which is filled with attachments, or aversions, love or hate pain or pleasure and other dual experiences, is like a dream. It appears to be really happening as long as the dream continues, but appears unreal, when one is awake. Similarly one's dual experiments in this world appear illusory when one attains self-knowledge through contemplation of such vedic statements as Tatwamasi (Thou art that) and Aham Brahmasmi (I am Brahma)

7.   Taavat satyam Jagadbhati

Suktikaa Rajatam Yatha

Yavanna Jnayate Brahma

Sarvadhistaanam-Advayam.

When we look into an oyster shell, it appears like silver. But it is only a silvery shining. Similarly till we know the indivisible and Supreme Self which is called Brahma, all this creation appears to be real and permanent.

Actually every thing we see, hear and feel is creation of Brahma. Whereas Brahma is indivisible, unique and permanent, his creation appears to be different beings which is nothing but illusion. Because of the effect of this Maya or ignorance, this world reflects itself as different beings and things. Once we know Brahma the ignorance is dispelled. The world that appeared to be real ceases to delude us.

8 Upadane Akhilaadhare

Jaganti Paramesware

Sarga sthiti Layaanyanti

Budbudaaneeva Vaarini

As bubble are developed in water, the whole world is created, developed and destroyed by the Brahma and exists because of the very Brahma.

The interesting thing is that Brahma is in the form of Pure Satchidananda and is like pure water. The bubble is this world which appears to have emanated from Brahma. But it has limited time of existence. As water bubble blows off to become absorbed in water, this world which is very very temporary remains for some time and is destroyed and absorbed in Brahma only.

9 Satchidaatmani Anusyoote

Nitye-Vishnow Prakalpitaah

Vyaktayo Vividhassarvaa

Haatake Katakaadivat.

All gold ornaments have different names but are basically of gold only. Similarly all the manifested world of things with different names are basically forms of the all pervading Vishnu, whose nature is Existence Intelligence (Satchit Atma).

When we take any gold ornament to a jeweller, he fixes its rate or value as gold only but not as that particular ornament. Similarly the man with Adhyatma outlook sees everything in this creation as Brahma but not as beings with dissimilar names.

10 Yathakaso Hrushikeso

Nanopadhi gatho Vibhuh

Tadbhedat Bhinnavat Bhati

Tannase Kevalo Bhavet.

Just as the all pervading Akasa appears to be diverse an account of its association with various conditionings (upadhis) which are different from each other, the omnipresent truth appears to be diverse on account of its association with the various "Upadhis". The omnipresent truth becomes one after the various upadhis are destroyed.

Whatever is above earth is sky. Then what is in a house is also sky though we are distinguishing the house as drawing room, bed room, kitchen and bath room, or by constructing walls. The walls are man made and due to worldly reasoning keeping us in a belief that they are all different rooms though they are actually sky. Once the walls are removed, there is no room and no house.

What is left there is sky. Similarly if man-made reasoning can be ignored, then we can see Parmatma in every being. Here just thinking is not enough but one must be able to feel and believe this concept whole heartedly.

11 Naanopaadhi Vasaadeva

Jaati Varnaasra maadayah

Atmanya aropitah thoye

Rasa Varnadi Bhedavat

Ideas such as caste, colour and position are imposed upon the Atman on account of its association with different upadhis, just as flavour, colour etc., are imposed upon water.

Pure water is same every where and has no colour, taste and smell. Only when subjected to human reasoning, we feel colour or taste or smell. Similarly because of faulty reasoning we feel Pure Atma as different body

beings, different races and of different origins. Even great scholars are influenced by the Maya of Paramatma so much that Atma is over shadowed by Anatma and we distinguish human being as man or woman of a particular race and particular religion.

If one can look beyond this faulty reasoning, the Pure Atma in every being can be visualised.

12 Pancheekruta Mahaabhoota

Sambhavam Karma Sanchitam

Sareeram Sukha-Dukhanaam

Bhogaayatanam Uchyate.

Due to a particular formulation of five elements of Nature (Pancha Bhootas) which are Earth, Fire, Sky, Water and Air, the human body is made. This is called Sthoola Sareera (gross body) the medium through which the Atma experiences and pleasure and pain. This

is given by Paramatma on the basis of Karma done by it in its previous births.

The process of such formulation of the five elements is called Panchikarana where one half of each of the five elements mixes with one of the other four.

Modern science concepts are worked in a different way but basically it is the nature's five elements that make human body. Science says it is made up of cells. A cell is made of organic matter which is called by our ancient Jnanis as earth.

Science agrees that Air and Water are there in the body. The Sky is actually anything empty. There is a lot of empty space in our body which is Sky. There is fire in in our body though we cannot see it. Modern Science calls it acidic reactions which are vital for digestion.

So the conclusion that human body is made up of just organic matter is only half the story. Jnanis consider that the main part of the formation of the human body has to do with sanchita karma i.e., the vast store of past actions the fruits of which have not been reaped.

13 Panchapraana Mano Buddhi

Dasendriya Samanvitam

Apancheekruta Bhootottham

Sookshmaangam Bhogasaadhanam.

The five Pranas are Prana, Apana, Vyna, Udana and Samana. Ten Organs are : five organs of perception - Eyes, Ears, Tongue, Nose and Skin and five organs of activity - Speech (Mouth), Hands, Legs and organs of excretion)

The Sookshma Sareera, subtle body is a combination of seventeen ingredients, five Pranas, ten Organs, Mind and Intellect, the instruments with which we experience pain pleasure.

The Sthoola Sareera gross body, is the one that gets old, diseased and dies. Sookshma Sareera leaves the gross body at the time of death and gets rebirth. It is not Atma that gets rebirth, according to Adwaita Doctrine. Atma is nothing but a form of Paramatma. It monifests itself in Sookshma Sareera and gets involved in the ties of human relations and gets elations and sorrows. It also does various Karmas both good and bad. Naturally the results follow and the Sookshma Sareera gets the rewards called good births and punishments called mean births. This process of rebirths stops only if in any birth this Sookshma Sareera gets out of Maya and understands the Atma in its body and gives up all worldly attachments and starts leading a life that befits Paramatma. Then it will join Paramatma which is called Moksha. Till it is attained this worldly pleasures and sorrows will be hunting it in every birth.

14 Anaadyavidya Anirvaachyaa

Kaaranopaadhi ruchyate

Upaadhi Tritayaadanyam

Atmaanam Avadhaarayet.

Avidya, ignorance, has no beginning and also quite difficult to difine. This is also called Karana Sareera (Causal Body). So every living body has three farms of sareera viz., Sthoola (gross body), Sookshma (subtle body) and Karana (causal body). The gross body and subtle body are products of Avidya and therefore Avidya is called the causal body. Known for certain that Atma is none of these. It is the witness to their three bodies and never to be identified with them. Atma or self luminous consciousness, illumines the acitivites of the gross and subtle bodies. It is itself detached from all the bodies. Because of ignorance we think and attribute all the qualities of the three Sareeras to Atma.

15 Panchakosaadi Yogena
Tat Tanmaya Iva Sthitah
Suddhaatma Neelavastraadi
Yogena Sphatiko Yathaa.

When covered by a blue cloth, a pure colourless crystal looks like a blue crystal. Similarly because of the union with the Five Kosas, the pure Atma appears to have borrowwed their qualities upon itself.

The Five Kosas (sheaths) are : Annamaya, Pranamaya, Manomaya, Vijnana Maya and Ananda Maya.

The details of all these Kosas are well discribed in the second chapter of Taittiriya Upanishad.

Annamaya Kosa is the physical body. Pranamaya Kosa is the one that has Five Pranas that breathes life into this physical body. Manomaya Kosa is responsible for our twin feelings like happiness and sorrow. It

controls our mind Vijnanamaya Kosa controls our intellect. These three constitute the Sookshma Sareera.

The Anandamaya Kosa which belongs to our Karana Sareera and controls our emotions is not real Ananda. Real and Saswata Ananda belongs to Atma. It is therefore established that none of the three sareeras is Atma.

16 Vapus Tushadibhih Kosaih
Yuktam Yuktya Avaghaatatah
Atmanam Antaram Suddham
Vivichyaat Tandulam Yatha.

Just as rice is obtained by pounding paddy and separating the husk, bran etc., we can separate Pure Atma within from the encircling of Five Kosas through careful discrimination. When one clearly realises the soul to be distinct from the Kosas, he becomes detached from them. This detachment is followed by knowledge of the self.

17 ***Sada Sarvagato Apyatmaa***

Na Sarvatra Avabhaasate

Buddhaaveva Avabhaaseta

Swaccheshu Pratibimbavat

Atma pervades every where. But it will not shine in every thing. It will manifest only in the purest form of Buddhi. As a perfect image is reflected in a perfect mirror, Atma can shine only in the purest form of Buddhi or intellect which is an integral part of Sookshma Sareera.

18 ***Dehendriya Mano Buddhi***

Prakrutibhyo Vilakshanam

Tadvrutti Sakshinam Vidya

Atmaanam Raajavat Sada

As a king observes the entertainment in his court hall without being a participant, Atma is distinct from the body, senses, mind and intellect and is the witness of their functions.

19 ***Vyapruteshu Indriyeshu Atmaa***

Vyaapaareeva Avivekinaam

Drusyate Abhreshu Dhavatsu

Dhavanniva Yathaa Sasee.

An ignorant person thinks that the moon is moving whereas it is the clouds that are really moving. Similarly to the non-discriminating people, the Atma appears to be active when it is observed through the functions of the sense - organs.

20 ***Atma Chaitanyam aasritya***

Dehendriya Manodhiyah

Swakriyardheshu Vartante

Suryaalokam Yatha Janaah.

As men do their own work in the light of sun, the body, organs, Manas and Buddhi do their own work in Atma Chaitanya or consciousness.

When the sun shines we do so many acts both good and bad in sunlight though the sun is in no way responsible other than giving light.

Similarly for the actions of body organs, Manas or Buddhi, Atma is not to be held responsible.

21 Dehendriya Gunaan Karmaani

Amale Satchidatmani

Adhyasyanti avivekena

Gagane Neelataadivat.

As one believes the sky is blue, all the deeds and characteristics of body and organs are attributed to blemishless Atma due to lack of power of discrimination.

Pure Atma is blemishless and it has both Sat and Chit. It has no birth, age, death, achievements or failures. It is not therefore possible to characterise it.

Body and organs do both good and bad deeds. Their result will go to Sookshma Sareera but not to Pure Atma. That is why Adisankara argues that Pure Atma is the light within but not Jeevatma which is forced to take births till it attains purity and becomes Pure Atma or Brahma. The deeds done by body and organs are like illusions as far as Pure Atma is concerned. It is like the deeds of a character in a play or drama which do not affect the person donning the role.

22 Ajnaanat maanasopadheh

Kartrutwaadeeni cha Atmani

Kalpyante Ambugate Chandre

Chalanadi Yatha Ambhasah.

The reflection of moon in water that is not still gives an impression that the moon is moving because of ignorance. Similarly due to ignorance, the deeds, feelings and responsibilities are attributed to Atma though they belong to Sookshma Sareera.

When we say some person has done a good or bad deed or his thinking is evil or noble or he is enjoying or suffering, every time we mean his body but not his pure Atma.

23 Raageechaa Sukha Duhkhaadi
Buddhow Satyaam Pravartate
Sushuptow Naasti Tannaase
Tasmaad Buddhestu Naatmanah.

Attachment, desire, happiness, pain and such other feelings are perceived to exist so long as mind or intellect functions. They are not perceived in deep sleep (sushupti) when the mind ceases to exist. Therefore they belong to the mind alone and not to Atma.

24 Prakaaso Arkasya Toyasya
Saityam Agneryathoshnataa
Swabhaavah Satchidananda
Nitya Nirmalata Atmanah.

Brightness is sun's nature, coolness is water's nature, heat fire's nature. Similarly the nature of Atma is Sath (Absolute Existence), Chith (Absolute Knowledge) Ananda (Absolute Bliss), Permanence and Purity.

25 Atmanah Satchidamsascha
Buddheh vruttiriti Dwayam
Samyojya cha Avivekena
Jaanaameeti Pravartate.

Due to the indiscriminate blending of (1) the existence knowledge aspect of Atma and (2) the thought wave of the Budhi or Intellect, there arises the notion of 'I know'.

Atma's nature is Sath and Chith which is absolute without Time and Space. The mind's behaviour is always limited to Time and Space.

When we get Atma Jnana there is only Jnana but no learner and nothing to learn. Pure Atma does not have any of the

weaknesses of Manas. That is why it is does not think "I know". It is the mind's weakness like Ego that causes ignorance and makes one think "I know".

26 Atmano Vikriyaa naasti
Buddherbodhohna Jaatwiti
Jeevah Sarvam Alam Jnatwa
Jnataa Drusteti Muhyati.

Atma never does anything. It is eternal. It is knowledge itself and is not affected by the mental thoughts and physical actions. Buddhi or Intellect has no capacity to experience "I know". But the individuality (Jeeva) in us in its ignorance of its true nature falsely identifies itself with the Body - Mind and Intellect and thinks out of delusion that himself is the see and the knower.

27 ***Rajju Sarpavad Aatmaanam***

Jeevam Jnatvaa Bhayam Vaheth

Naaham Jeevah Paraatmeti

Jnateschet Nirbhayo Bhaveth.

Just as one regards a mere rope as a snake and is overcome by fear because of illusion and fears to touch it, the Jiva due to thinking that he is a human being but not Paramatma itself is overcome by fear. But when he learns with definite Jnana that he is Brahma himself he will be above all such reactions and never fears of anything.

28 ***Atma Avabhasayatyeko***

Buddhyadeen Indriyaanyapi

Deepo Ghataadi vat Swaatmaa

Jadai Stair Na Avabhasyate.

Just as a lamp illumines a pot or a jar, the Atma illumines the mind and the sense

organs also. These material objects like pot cannot illumine themselves because they are inert and have no chaitanya. The Atma in us is the one illuminating factor, the Pure consciousness, which alone illumines the mind (Buddhi) and sense organs.

29 Swabodhe Naanya Bodhecchaa
Bodha Rupataya Atmanah
Na Deepasya Anya Deepecchaa
Yadhaa Swatma Prakaasane.

Atma which is knowledge itself does not require other knowledge to know it, just as a lighted lamp does not need another lamp to illumine its light.

Atma as explained earlier is itself the illuminating one. What else can illuminate it? The only requirement is removal of ignorance. Then automatically the illumination of Atma comes out.

30 Nishidhya Nikhilopaadheen
Neti Neteeti Vakyatah
Vidyadaikyam Mahaavaakyaih
Jeevatma Paramaatmanoh.

The oneness of the individual soul (Jeevatma) and the Supreme Soul (Paramatma) as indicated by the Vedic aphorisms (Mahavakyas) has to be realised by a process of negation of the conditionings (upadhis) through the help of spiritual statemtns, "It is not this", "It is not this". (Neti Neti)

The Vedic apporisms (Maha Vakyas) are :

1) Rigveda : 'Prajnanam Brahma' meaning consciousness itself is Brahma.
2) Yajurveda : "Aham Brahmasmi" meaning I am Brahma.
3) Sama Veda : "Tathwamasi" meaning 'That one is you'.
4) Adharwa Veda : "Ayamatma Brahma" meaning This Atma itself is Brahma.

If one understands the Maha Vakyas in all the vedas he can start realising that Atma is not Manas. Likewise by discriminating and eliminating one by one, we can find out Jivatma is nothing but Paramatma.

31 Aavidyakam Sareeraadi Drusyam

Budbudavat Ksharam

Etat Vilakshanam Vidyaat

Aham Brahmeti Niramalam

The forms of all three Sareeras viz' the gross (sthoola), the subtle (sookshma) and the causal (karana) are time bound like bubbles in water. Atma is none of these and is Pure Brahma itself.

Once any one realises through discrimination that he is nothing but Pure Brahma, he will not identify himself with any

of the Sareeras and is immune to all dualities and feelings.

32 Deha Anyatvat Na me Janma
Jara Kaarsya Layaadayah
Sabdaadi Vishayaih Sango
Nireendriya tayaa Na Cha.

The following meditation (slokas 32 to 36) is suggested in order to strengthen the knowledge of the soul's oneness with Brahma.

"I am not the body that has time bound existence, birth, old age, weakness and death. I have nothing to do with the sense objects such as sound and taste, for I am without the sense organs."

We are talking about Pure Atma. For a Brahma Jnani, only Atma is the concern. All the organs and body that constitute the three forms of Sareera are of no relevance to him.

He will not get attached to any of them. So for him there are no births, no attachments and no interest in the pleasures and pains caused by sense organs. By getting detachment from them, he is able to get Eternal Bliss.

As explained earlier, the process of discrimination is taking place by confirming one by one that 'I' is not this and this. First it is confirmed that, 'I' is not body or organs.

33 Amanastwaat Na me
Dukha Raaga Dwesha Bhayaadayah
Apraano Hi Amanaassubhra
Ityaadi Sruti saasanaat

"I am not Manas and hence I am not having sorrow, attachment, malice and fear". The commandment of the upanishads is that Atma is without breath and without mind and is pure. The atma does not have any features of the mind (manas).

Manas only experiences happiness and sorrow. When we are indeep sleep, we are not experiencing any of the features of Manas. But Atma exists ever in deep sleep. Hence Atma is not Manas (mind).

34 Nirguno Nishkriyo Nityo
Nirvikalpo Niranjanah
Nirvikaaro Niraakaaro
Nitya Muktosmi Nirmalah.

Atma is without attributes and actions. It is eternal, without any desire or thought, without any vasanas, without any change, without form, ever liberated and ever pure.

Here Atma's nature is described. It is Eternal because it has no limits time and space. It is free from any attachment because it has nothing to do with mind. It has no actions because it has nothing to do with the body or organs.

35 Aham Aakaasavath Sarvam

Bahir Antargato Achyutah

Sadaa Sarva Samassuddho

Nissango Nirmalo Achalah

"Like the space (Akasa). I fill all things within and without. I am changeless and the same in all. I am Pure, unattached, stainless and motionless."

36 Nitya Suddha Vimuktaikam

Akhanda Anandam Advayam

Satyam Jnanam Anamtam

Yatparam Brahma Aham eva tat

"I alone an the supreme Brahma which is pure, eternal and free and which is indivisible, non-dual and changeless in all the periods of time. It is knowledge itself and is infinite."

These slokas 32-36 there is a discussion of Brahma as defined in

Upanishads like Taittiriya. So for a better understanding the reader is advised to go through the Upanishad.

37 Evam Nirantara Abhyastaa
Brahmaiva asmeeti Vaasanaa
Harati Avidya Vikshepaan
Rogaaniva rasaayanam.

Thus, the impression (Vasana) created by constant practice of 'Aham Brahmasmi destroys ignorance and the agitation (vikshepa) caused by Avidya, just as medicine destroys disease.

The practice of Aham Brahmasmi has to be intensified by long reflection to destroy ignorance.

Let us now find out how to do this.

38 ***Vivikta Desa Aaseeno***

Viraago Vijitendriyah

Bhaavayet Ekam Aatmaanam

Tam Anantam Ananyadheeh.

One should sit in a solitary place with a mind free from desires and controlling the sense organs, meditate with unswerving attention on the Atma which is infinite and one without a second.

39 ***Atmanyeva Akhilam Drusyam***

Pravilaapya Dhiyaa Sudheeh

Bhavayet Ekam Aatmaanam

Nirmala Akaasavat Sadaa.

The wise man should merge this visible world with Atma alone in an intelligent way and constantly think of the Atma as the stainless or pure sky.

Here the intellgence needed is the power of discrimination. Merging the visible world with Atma is by visualising the Atma in everything in the world that has Chetana and is seen by the eyes.

40 Roopa Varnaadikam Sarvam
Vihaaya Paramaarthavit
Paripoorna Chidananda
Svaroopena Avatishtate.

One who has realised by constant practice of meditation the Supreme Paramatma discards all things with names and forms. He then remains as an embodiment of the infinite consciousness and bliss.

Such an Aatma Jnani will not only experience Chidananda but becomes Ananda personified.

41 ***Jnaatru Jnaana Jneya Bhedah***

Pare na Atmani Vidyate

Chidananda Eka Roopatwaat

Deepyate Swayameva hi.

There are no distinctions, such as 'knower' 'knowledge' and the 'object of knowledge' in the Supreme self (Paramatma). As the nature of Paramatma is endless Bliss and self luminous, there are no such distinctions within itself. At alone shines.

42 ***Evam Aatma Aranau Dhyaana***

Mathane Satatam Krute

Uditaava Gatir Jvaalaa

Sarva Ajnaana Indhanam Dahet.

In ancient days, the sacrificial fire was kindled by rubbing of two pieces of wood one placed upon another (Arani).

By churning in the form of constant contemplation on the maha mantra, Aham Brahmasmi. (I am the supreme self) in the Arani of Atma with mind as the lower piece and 'om' as upper piece, the fire of knowledge (Jnana) is born and it shall burn down all the ignorance (Ajnana) in us.

43 Arune neva Bodhena
Poorva Santamase Hrute
Tata Aavirbhavet Aatmaa
Swayameva Amsumaaniva.

The Lord of early dawn, Aruna, drives away darkness of the night and heralds sunrise. Similarly while the darkness of Ajnana is destroyed by knowledge, Atma rises within of its own accord like sunrise

44 Atmaatu Satatam Praapto
Api Apraptavat Avidyayaa
Tannase Praaptavat Bhaati
Swa Kanthaabharanam Yatthaa

Atma is an ever present reality (Sat). Yet it is not realised due to ignorance (Ajnana). When ignorance is destroyed. Atman is realised as an object newly gained, just as the ornament of one's neck.

A person searches for the gold ornament already in his neck due to his forgetfullness. When he later finds it, he feels very happy as if he found a new ornament. He has thus lamented over a thing which is not lost.

The Atma is ever with us. We only recognise it when the cause for its veiling viz., ignorance (Ajnana) is removed through constant and sincere sadhana.

45 Sthaanau Purushavat Bhraantyaa
Krutaa Brahmani Jeevataa
Jeevasya Taathvike Roope
Tasmin Drushte Nivartate.

Due to delusion, a tree appears to be a man. Similarly Brahman who is Paramatma appears to be Jivatma because of delusion. When such delusion is destroyed, the real nature of Jiva is realised as the Atma.

46 Tathva Swaroopa Anubhavaa
Utpannam Jnaanam Anjasaa
Aham Mameti cha Ajnaanam
Baadhate Digbhramadivat.

Just as the identity of directions East, West, North, South is known when sunrises and dispels darkness, the knowledge produced by the realisation of the true nature of Atma destroys the ignorance (Ajnana) which gave rise to the wrong notions of possession - the "I" and "mine" in every one.

The sense of "I" and the concept of "mine" both become meaningless and delusory when the Atma is realised as one universal reality.

47 ***Samyak Vijnanavaan Yogee***

Swatmanyeva Akhilam Jagat

Ekam Cha Sarvam Atmaana

Eeekshyate Jnana Chakshushaa

The yogi of perfect realisation sees through his eye of wisdom (Jnana Chakshu) the entire universe (Jagat) as the manifestation of his own Atma and regards everything else as his own Atma and nothing else.

48 ***Atma eva idam Jagat sarvam***

Atmano Anyat na Vidyate

Mrudo Yadvat Ghataadeeni

Swatmaanam Sarvam Eekshyate

The entire universe is verily Atma. Nothing other than Atma exists. Pots, Jars and other potteries are made of clay (mud). They come out of mud and finally go back to the same mud. There is no separate existence

for the mud pots or jars apart from the mud. So too Atma is the reality (Sat) which has given shape to the world (Jagat) of different names and forms. This is rightly understood by the man of wisdom (Jnani).

49 Jeevan Muktastu Tat Vidvaan
Poorvopaadhi Gunaan Tyajet
Satchidananda Roopatvaat
Bhavet Bhramara Keetavat.

A Jivanmukta i.e, one who has realised the Atma by long years of meditation upon the divine nature of the Atma and has become completely free from ignorance (Avidya), even while he lives in his body, gives up the traits of the gross, subtle and casual bodies (upadhis) On account of his nature of Sat Chit Ananda, he verily becomes Brahma, like the worm which grows up in the mud nest for a long time and transforms into a wasp after contemplation over the form and nature of the wasp.

50 ***Teertva Mohaarnavam Hatvaa***

Raaga Dveshadi Rakshasaan

Yogee Saanti Samayuktah

Atmaa Ramo Viraajate

The Yogi who crosses the ocean of Moha (delusion) and kills the demons called likes and dislikes will be peaceful and dwells in the glory of his own real self as an Atma Rama.

Here the phrase Atma Rama is used suggesting that Atma is godly like Rama, the incarnation of Paramatma who crossed the real ocean and killed demon Ravana.

51 ***Baahya Anitya Sukhaasaktim***

Hitva Atma Sukha Nirvruttah

Ghatastha Deepavat Svasthah

Swarntareva Prakaasate.

The Jeevan Mukta who relinquishes all his attachments to the illusory (Anitya) and external (Bahya) happiness and is satisfied with the bliss derived from Atma, shines inwardly like a lamp placed in a pot.

As the Jeevanmukta detaches from all sense organs, he turns the mind inward it will be still without any dielusions. Then his mind experiences this inward light of the Supreme Brahma.

52 Upadhisthopi Tatdharmaih
Alipto Vyomavanmunih
Sarvavit Moodhavat Tishteth
Asakto Vaayuvat Chareth.

The state of Jeevan Mukhta is further described in this sloka. Though he lives in the upadhis, he remains untainted like the sky (Vyomavat) and he moves abouts like the wind, perfectly unattached.

53 ***Upadhi Vilayaat Vishnau***
Nirvisesham Visermunih
Jale Jalam Viyat Vyomni
Tejas Tejasi Va Yatha.

When the upadhis are destroyed, a person who constantly contemplates on the divine, is totally absorbed in Vishnu, the all pervading spirit, just as water is absorbed into water, space into space and light into light.

54 ***Yallabhat Na Aparo Labho***
Yat Sukhat Na Aparam Sukham
Yat Jnanaat Na Aparam Jnaanam
Tath Brahmeti Avadharayet.

Realise that to be Brahma, the attainment of which leaves nothing more

to be attained, the blessedness (sukham) which is far more superior to any other blessedness, and the Jnana which is superior to any other knowledge.

The supreme experience of realization of Brahma is explained in this sloka as (1) the greatest gain, (2) the greatest knowledge (jnana) after gaining which none will like to add any more to it, (3) the greatest bliss of the self after enjoying which none will strive for a greater bliss.

All Upanishads like Bruhadaranyaka and Mundaka confirm this. The highest goal is to know Brahma and become Brahma only.

55 Yat Drustvaa na Aparam Drusyam
Yat bhootvaa na Punarbhavah
Yat Jnaatvaa na Aparam Jneyam
Tat Brahmeti Avadhaarayet.

After seeing which there is nothing else to be seen, after attaining which there will not be any more birth and after knowing which there is nothing else to be known, that is to be understood as Brahma.

For the Yogi who attained the highest goals of Adhyatma and became a Brahma Jnani, nothing else is required because everything else is dismal compared to the Brahma.

Bhagavat Gita calls this highest goal as the Supreme Abode and Yogis reach there never to return. (Chap 2-72)

56 Tiryak Oordhvam Adhah Poornam

Satchidanandam Advayam

Anantam Nityam Ekam Yat

Tat Brahmeti Avadhaarayet.

The one that pervades in all places even above and below is Brahma. It is one without a second. It is infinite, eternal and filled with Satchidananda. It exists as only one. That one is to be understood as Brahma.

This description of Brahma is in Mundaka Upanishad which also says that it is immortal and is there before and exists behind and in all sides.

57 Atat Vyaavrutti Roopena

Vedaantaih Lakshyate Advayam

Akhandanandam Ekam Yat

Tat Brahmeti Avadhaarayety.

This Brahma is nondual, indivisible, blissful and always exists as only one. The Upanishads indicate that this Brahma is reached by a process of negation of what it is not and of assertion of what it is.

58 Akhandananda Roopasya Tasya

Ananda Lavaasritaah

Brahmaadyaah Taaratamyena

Bhavanti Anandino Akhilaah.

All the deities like Indra, Varuna and others worshipped by us, are only a particle of the unlimited bliss of Para Brahma and accordingly enjoy their proportionate share of that particle.

Every living being who worships deities enjoy the bliss of Paramatma according to his capacity . But it is only a very small fraction of the total Atmananda the Parabrahma is capable of giving.

According to vedanta all meritorious and righteous men after death enjoy a particle of the Bliss of Paramatma. After the fraction of Bliss of Paramatma is exhausted, they are again born as great men and help to establish Dharma.

We can imagine this easily. In the Paramatma's incarnation as Lord Krishna. Who told, "I will be born again and again to destroy Adharma and to establish Dharma."

59 Tad Yuktam Akhilam Vastu

Vyavahaara satadanvitah

Tasmaat Sarvagatam Brahma

Ksheere Sarpiriva Akhile.

The whole creation is pervaded by Brahma. It is because of Brahma only all actions are taking place in this universe. Brahma permeates everything as butter permeates milk.

Here the example of Butter and Milk is given because butter is in milk but not directly visible. To get butter one has to churn milk. Similarly Brahma is spread in the whole universe but not visible. Only by intense meditation, it is possible to realise Brahma. Not able to see does not mean it does not exist. This is a perfect example given in vedanta to explain Paramatma's existence.

60 Ananu Asthoolam Ahraswam
Adeergham Ajam Avyayam
Aroopa Guna Varnaakhyam
Tat Brahmeti Avadharayet

Brahma is neither subtle nor gross, neither short nor long. It has no birth, no changes, no form, no quality, no colour and even no particular name.

Some of these qualities are explained in Bruhadaranyaka Upanishad where one gets more detailed discussion about Brahmatatwa which is imperceptible to the mind and hence cannot be described.

61 Yadbhaasaa Bhaasate Arkadi
Bhasyairyattu Na Bhasyate
Yena Sarvamidam Bhati
Tat Brahmeti Avadhaarayeti.

All heavenly bodies are illuminated by Brahma and are shining. But Brahma is not illuminated by their light.

It is once again confirmed in this sloka that but for the illuminating power of Brahma nothing can shine in this universe.

62 Swayam Antar Bahir Vyapya
Bhasayan Akhilam Jagat
Brahma Prakaasate Vahni
Pratapta Ayasa Pindavat.

The Supreme Brahma while pervading the entire universe outwardly and inwardly, shines of itself like the five that permeates a red hot iron-ball and glow as fire itself.

An iron ball when in contact with fire for a sufficiently long time comes to glow as fire itself.

63 Jagat Vilakshanam Brahma
Brahmano Anyata Kinchana
Brahma Anyat Bhatichet Mithya
Yadha Maru Mareechikaa.

Brahma is entirely different from universe, but there exists nothing in the universe that is not Brahma. If any object in universe other than Brahma appears to exist, it is unreal like the mirage which appears to be giving water in a desert.

64 Drusyate Srooyate Yadyat
Brahmano Anyan Na Tat Bhavet
Tathvajnaanaat Cha Tadbrahma
Satchidanandam Advayam

All that is perceived or heard through the sense organs is Brahma only. The Brahma that is non dual and which is in the form of Satchidananda is known only after attaining the knowledge of the Reality.

Whatever exists either in this limited body, mind and intellect or in the outer created world, they are all manifestations of the Brahma and nothing else. When this truth is realised and experienced, one can see the entire universe in which the Brahma revels as satchit Ananda absolute because it is one and only one Ekam Eva Advitiyam Brahma.

65 Sarvagam Satchidaatmaanam
Jnana Chakshur Nireekshate
Ajnaana Chakshur Na Eekshet
Bhaswantam Bhanum Andhavat

We can visualise Atma that has universal existence with the help of Jnana netra (eye of knowledge) only, just as the blind cannot see the resplendent sun.

66 Sravanaadibhi Uddepta
Jnaanaagni Paritapitah
Jeeva Sarvamalat Muktah
Swarnavat Dyotate Swayam

The Jeeva is purified by heating in the fire of knowledge kindled by hearing, reasoning and deep contemplation on what has been heard and reasoned out. Then the Jeeva shines of itself like pure gold obtained after melting and purifying the gold ore. Just as one heats gold ore in a cruicible to purify it, one has to use the fire of Jnana to purify the mind.

Jnana can be achieved according to Hindu philosophy by Sravana (hearing) Manana (reasoning of truth) and Nidhi Dhyasana (deep contemplation). Then the mind will be free from impure thoughts, and the feeling of Jeeva gets automatically extinguished. Then only the self-illuminating Atma exists.

67 Hrudaakaasodito hi Atmaa
Bodha Bhaanus Tamopahrut
Sarva Vyaapee Sarva Dhaaree
Bhaati Bhaasayate Akhilam

The Atma, Sun of Knowledge, which rises in the sky of the heart, destroys the darkness of ignorance, pervades everything and sustains all. It shines and makes everything in the universe to shine.

Heart here means the arena of the mind from where noble and humane thoughts flow.

Here Sun is brought into comparison because it is the ultimate source of light visible to the naked eye.

68 Dikdesa Kaa laadi Anapekshya Sarvagam
Seetadi Hrunnitya Sukham Niramjanam
Yassvaatma Teerdham Bhajate Vinishkriyam
Sa Sarvavit Sarva Gato Amruto Bhavet.

The Jnani who

(1) is free from all the limitations of time, space and direction.

(2) worships the holy place of his own Atma which is present everywhere, which destroys heat and cold and which is bliss eternal and stainless becomes all knowing and all pervading and attains immortality.

Thus ends Atma Bodha May God Bless all the beings of universe.

Om Tat Sat



This book is dedicated to
Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Varu